

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

If the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) has a statement to make on the matter would it not be more normal if he made it when we come back to the question of privilege, instead of making it on the orders of the day?

We have no objection to the Prime Minister making his statement, but he should do so when we revert to the question of privilege, which was not raised during the question period which lasts only an hour on Wednesday. We would like to discuss this matter later.

[Text]

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I am attempting to answer the question, and in view of its importance the answer may be a little longer than might otherwise be necessary. I hope my hon. friends will give me the opportunity of dealing with the situation in this way, as an answer to the question.

The answer is that we appreciate, as I know all members of the house appreciate, the importance of the points raised yesterday and the necessity of keeping on an absolute basis of legal and practical equity in Canada the two official languages in respect of all proceedings of this house and its committees.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: There are practical difficulties, of course, but we are making progress in overcoming them and in the application of this essential principle to all committee work. Those practical difficulties were underlined in the discussions we had yesterday, but notwithstanding the accelerated procedure and priority given to the translation of the proceedings and evidence before the pension committee, that translation has not yet been completed. We were informed yesterday that in spite of the efforts being made it will take a few weeks before that translation can be completed.

I appreciate the point made, that the translation of that evidence into French should be in the hands of the members before we proceed with important legislation of this kind. I think we are all in agreement in that regard. We have been making the kind of progress toward that objective in the last few years which has not been achieved in the 50, 60 or 70 years before the last few years.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: I said the last few years, Mr. Speaker, not the last two years. When these facts were brought to my attention yesterday

in relation to the time that would be required, I instructed those concerned in the government to put aside all other forms of translation work, except *Hansard* and essential work of that kind, and give top and exclusive priority to the translation of the rest of the minutes of the committee, working around the clock and during the week end.

I hope the permanent arrangements will make this kind of emergency procedure unnecessary in the future. This is the first time this has been done, but I might point out to the house that we are very glad to break new ground in this respect, as in other respects; and by this crash action—

Mr. Mandziuk: Crashed again?

An hon. Member: Sixty days.

Mr. Pearson: I am sorry, but I am having some difficulty in making myself heard. I hope the hon. member who asked the question can hear my answer.

Mr. Starr: Why don't you give him an answer?

Mr. Pearson: As a result of this action now taken the translation should be completed in a few days, by Monday or early next week. I hope this type of special action will not have to be repeated, because it means sacrificing translation work for departments of government and we do not want to do that except in an emergency.

I hope, in view of this, that clause 1 can be completed today and this bill can then be reprinted. If that can be done, Mr. Speaker, and indeed whether or not it is done, I give the house the assurance that third reading of the bill will not be called until the translation of the minutes into French is available to all hon. members.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Another run for cover.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister's statement concerns especially our group—

Mr. Valade: It concerns everyone.

Mr. Caouette: It is intended especially for us. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that we do not object particularly to the carrying of clause 1 in Bill No. C-136. However, the Prime Minister will agree with me that if clause 1 is carried and we wait for the third reading, each of us will have the right to speak only at a given time, and we will be restricted by the rules of the house; we have so many things to say on this bill.